

# GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED

# **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED**

## **I. Statement of Purpose**

General Characteristics and Needs of Individuals Served Training will provide participants with a basic understanding of the characteristics and needs of individuals with developmental disabilities. This training will enable staff to:

- Define “developmental disability” and identify specific conditions that qualify individuals as having developmental disabilities
- Define the major characteristics (of mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism.)
- Distinguish between mental retardation and mental illness
- Recount historical data relating to the provision of services for people with developmental disabilities
- Identify the general and specific needs of people with developmental disabilities

## **II. Timeframe: 2 hours**

## **III. Methodologies**

A variety of methodologies may be used to teach this material:

1. Role Play
2. Active Discussion
3. Group exercises with case studies
4. Discussions of personal accomplishments and how they were obtained



## **IV. Outcomes/Competencies**

A. Staff will define “developmental disability” and identify specific conditions that qualify individuals as having developmental disabilities.

1. Developmental Disabilities definition –public law 95-602
2. AAMIR definition of mental retardation
3. Causes of Developmental Disabilities
  - Pregnant mother’s health
  - Difficult or abnormal delivery
  - Early childhood accidents or illnesses
  - Genetic disorders
  - Metabolic disorders
  - Many times the cause is unknown

B. Staff will describe the major characteristics (of mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autism.)

Mental Retardation –common characteristics:

- Social behavior
- Self concept
- Transfer of learning
- Motor coordination
- Communication skills
- Following directions
- Self direction

2. Cerebral Palsy – three types:
  - a. Spastic
    - Tight rigid muscles
    - Movement is difficult
    - Abnormal positions
  - b. Athetoid
    - Involuntary
    - Flailing movements
  - c. Mixed type
    - Above types, along with tremors (shaking, trembling)
3. Epilepsy .three common types of seizures
  - a. Tonic Clonic (also known as Grand Mal)
    - Body stiffens, jerks violently
    - May lose consciousness
  - b. Absence (also known as “Petit Mal”)
    - Temporary loss of awareness for a few seconds (blank stare)
    - Eyelashes flutter
    - Often goes unnoticed
  - c. Complex Partial (also known as Psychomotor or Temporal Lobe)
    - Useless motions
    - Walking aimlessly
    - Picking things up
    - Smacking lips for a few seconds or minutes

4. **Autism** –common characteristics

- a. Impaired communication skills
- b. Difficulty forming social relationships
- c. Exhibit unusual behaviors such as;
  - Rocking
  - Ritualistic hand movements
  - Sudden crying or laughing without cause
  - Self-injurious behavior
- d. Become attached to inanimate objects
- e. **Become dependent on set routines**

C. **Staff will distinguish between mental retardation and mental illness.**

**Causes of mental illness**

- Medical/organic
- Stress
- Behavioral
- **Genetic**
- Psychodynamic

2. Specific contrasts between the two conditions:

**Mental Retardation**

**Mental Illness**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| • Mental retardation begins prior to age 18                      | • <b>Mental illness can</b> occur at any age                                   |
| • No known cure for mental retardation                           | • Some types of mental illness can be cured or controlled by use of medication |
| • <b>Mental retardation</b> cannot be caused by emotional trauma | • Mental illness can be caused by emotional trauma                             |
|  | • People with mental illness may <b>have average</b> intellects                |

- 3.** A person with mental retardation can also have a mental illness
- a. Dual Diagnosis .A condition of having mental retardation and experiencing at least one diagnosable form of mental illness.
  - b. Factors increasing the chance that mental illness will occur:
    - Communication deficit
    - Stress
    - Poor coping skills
    - Existing central nervous system (CNS) problems
    - Inclusion in a “ready to diagnose” system
    - Past history of abuse/neglect
  - c. Treatment for mental illness
    - Medication
    - Counseling
    - Environmental supports

**D. Staff will recount historical data relating to the provision of services for people with developmental disabilities.**

Review history of structure services:

- Mid 1800's First residential training facility
- 1870-1890 Residential schools were considered transitional and prepared for return to productive lives in the community
- 1890-1925 Attitudes that mental retardation was hereditary **were** responsible for a disproportionate amount of crime and anti-social behavior  
Facilities became crowded and services became custodial care
- 1945-1959 Formation of advocacy groups
- Since 1969 Population in institutions has decreased steadily, focus on community programs (group homes, day habilitation programs)
- Current People with developmental disabilities are being served in the community with the focus being on individualized support systems (self-directed)

**E. Staff will identify the general and specific needs of people with developmental disabilities.**

Understanding that people with developmental disabilities are more like us than different

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs

**2. Specific services for people with developmental disabilities:**

**a. Childhood**

- Early intervention
- Special education programs
- Speech therapy
- Physical/occupational therapy



b. Adolescence

- Vocational/occupational skills training
- Sex education
- Social behavior counseling
- Transition from school to work, and from family home to own home

c. Adulthood

- Support/training to perform skills at home and at work
- Counseling/support on building social relationships
- Support with community integration

d. In later years

- Retirement options
- Leisure and recreational activities

## **Guiding Principles in Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities**

- Treat people with respect and dignity
- Use “People First” language (discuss the person first and their disability second when referring to someone that has a disability, i.e., “a person who has mental retardation,” vs. “a mentally retarded person”)
- Build and support relationships
- Utilize natural supports (friends, neighbors, church members, etc.)
- Stress community involvement
- Support active participation in activities (not just a “token” member)
- Use non-intrusive, natural interventions
- Be sensitive to individual rights
- Maintain natural routines and rhythms
- Age appropriate (activities, belongings, etc.)
- **Choice!**
- Active in respective relationships
- Build/maintain relationship with families
- Role model
- Functional skills teaching
- Awareness of own language
- Promote competencies **and** personal growth
- Enhance quality in a person’s life

## **Resources for Characteristics and Needs of Individuals Served Training**

Kennedy Krieger Community Resources, *The Characteristics and Needs of Individuals with Developmental Disabilities*, 1994

Young Adult Institute, *Understanding Developmental Disabilities*, videotape and workbook, Y.A.I. Institute, N.Y. 1990

## **Characteristics and Needs of Individuals Served**

### **Post Test**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. A developmental disability is one that keeps developing until age 22. T      F
2. All people with developmental disabilities have some degree of Mental retardation. T      F
3. Most developmental disabilities are hereditary. T      F
- 4... People with developmental disabilities are more like non-disabled individuals that they are different from them. T      F
5. Our perceptions and attitudes towards people with developmental disabilities influence the way we behave towards them.
6. Most people with mental retardation are “normal” looking. T      F
7. Mental retardation and mental illness are:
  - a. often related to each other
  - b. usually found in the same person
  - c. the same thing
  - d. totally different conditions
  - e. conditions that follow each other
8. Which of the following is a developmental disability?
  - a. mental retardation
  - b. cerebral palsy
  - c. epilepsy
  - d. autism
  - e. all of the above



Characteristics and Needs of Individuals Served  
Post Test  
Page 2.

9. Mental retardation responds best to:
- a. medicine
  - b. psychiatry
  - c. education, training, and support
  - d. all of the above
10. People with cerebral palsy:
- a. have brain damage
  - b. can't use their muscles
  - c. will have children with disabilities
  - d. all of the above
11. People with mental retardation:
- a. have IQ's of less than 70
  - b. have had noticeable difficulties since they were children
  - c. have difficulty functioning successfully in their environment without support
  - d. all of the above
12. I.Q. tests are very reliable T      F
13. People who have mental retardation have the right to a  
Public Education until the age of 21. T      F
14. Name the three general types of seizures.

Score/Comments:

---

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_